

Carl and Adolph Buenger:

Leaders of Friedens Lutheran Church and
The Southeastern Wisconsin District

Andrew Glende
CH3031
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“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (Hebrews 13:7). The Lord gives us this explicit command from God’s Word. It is God’s imperative command to “remember” the spiritual leaders that he has graciously called to his Church. Two such leaders of God’s church in the twentieth century were Carl and Adolph Buenger. For seventy-six continuous years this father and son served in the pastoral ministry at Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Twenty-seven years of their combined pastoral ministries they served as district presidents of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We now take this opportunity to remember these two men of distinguished call and character.

This paper intends to observe their family history, to review their lives with biographical sketches, and to examine their years in the public ministry as both pastor and district president. In this brief space, then, let the reader well “consider the outcome of their way of life.”

The Buenger Family History

Louis Buenger, Carl’s father, was born in Hanover, Germany in 1839. Louis emigrated from Germany in 1856, at the age of 17. He first settled in Cincinnati, Ohio where he learned the trade of carpentry. In 1863 Louis decided to relocate to New Ulm, Minnesota. There, Louis joined a company in a search for coal around southern Minnesota. This business venture fell through for him because coal was not found in profitable quantities. Louis liked New Ulm so much, however, that he decided to remain there.

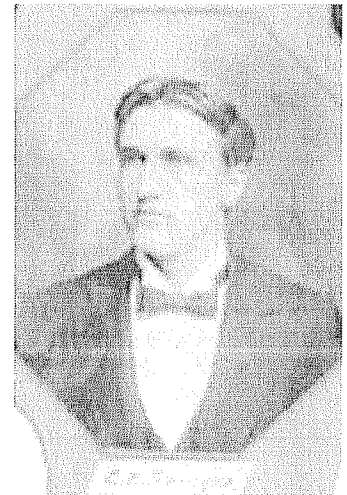
Louis established himself in New Ulm as a general contractor and continued in that work for several ~~of~~ years. Using the carpentry he learned in earlier years, Louis then opened up his own furniture store in 1876. Louis manufactured all the furniture he sold at the time. This continued until the railroad became established and shipments of furniture were imported from

larger manufacturers. Louis later would pass on this furniture store business to two of his sons ~~and would be~~. Buenger also ran a funeral home with a viewing room, morgue, and private chapel in connection with this furniture store.

Two years after locating in New Ulm, on October 26, 1865, Louis Buenger married Henrietta Ipps. Louis and Henrietta had seven children, they are (from oldest to youngest): Louis J., Emma (Mrs. Fred Backer), Anna (Mrs. Robert Fritsche), Carl, Emil, Matilda (Mrs. Paul Hackbarth), and Otto (two other children died in early childhood).¹

Carl H. Buenger (1875-1948)

Pastor Carl H. Buenger was born in New Ulm, Minnesota on March 15, 1875. Soon after his birth he was received into the Holy Christian Church by the sacrament of Holy Baptism. After due instruction in the gospel, he was received as a communicant member of St. Paul's in the rite of Confirmation. Upon completing his schooling at St. Paul's Lutheran School, he entered Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm and graduated in 1893. He then continued his



preparation for the pastoral ministry at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin and graduated in 1894. Carl concluded his course of studies when he graduated from the Theological Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin in 1897. He was ordained and installed as pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Morton Grove, Illinois on June 27 of that same year.

Carl Buenger entered into the state of holy matrimony with Clara Buuck on September 21, 1898. Clara preceded him in death on January 21, 1932. Their marriage union was blessed

¹ Louis J., Emil, and Otto all later would find employment in their family's furniture store business. Carl is the only son to enter into the pastoral ministry.

with three sons and three daughters. They are: Clara, Martin, Gehardt, Gertrude, Adolph, and Elsie.

Carl was installed as pastor of Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenosha, Wisconsin on December 14, 1902 by former Friedens pastor, Ernest F. Dornfeld and assisted by one Pastor Gensicke. On June 29, 1947, Friedens Congregation honored Carl Buenger by observing his golden anniversary in the public ministry. He held this office for a period of almost forty-six years, until his death in 1948.

Carl's years in the pastoral ministry did not only include his parish service. Pastor Buenger also served the Wisconsin Synod at large. From 1917 to 1934 he served as the first president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District. He also served as a member of the Board of Control for Northwestern College between 1919 and 1929.²

Our Lord Jesus Christ called Carl Buenger home to heaven on October 21, 1948 at the age of seventy-three. His obituary in the Friedens Messenger reads, "It was at two o'clock, while the church bell was tolling for the funeral procession of a member of the congregation just entering the church for the service, when he fell asleep in Jesus."³ The funeral service was held at Friedens on October 25, 1948. The Friedens Messenger describes the funeral as follows, "The church and the school rooms, where loud speakers had been installed, were filled to overflowing for the service, and many came from far and near to pay their respects, some on Sunday, while Pastor Buenger lay in state in the church from noon Sunday until the time of the service on Monday."⁴ Professor Edmund Reim, of the Theological Seminary at Thiensville, Wisconsin

² "Friedens Messenger," January 1949, vol. 6, number 1, 9.

³ Ibid, 8.

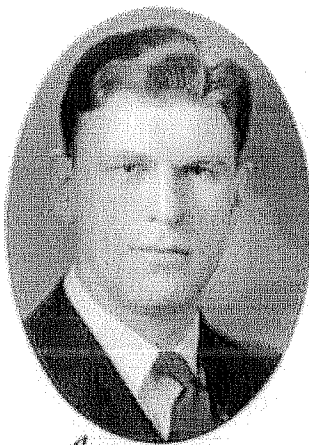
⁴ Ibid, 9.

preached in German, and Pastor Henry Diehl of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin preached the service in English. The burial followed at Green Ridge Cemetery in Kenosha.⁵

Adolph C. Buenger (1909-1982)

Adolph C. Buenger was born November 14, 1909, the son of Rev. Carl H. and Mrs. Clara (nee Buuck) Buenger in the Friedens parsonage at Kenosha, WI. Soon after his birth he was received into the Holy Christian Church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Adolph began his education at Friedens Lutheran School, also attending high school while he was there.

Adolph then graduated from Northwestern College of Watertown, Wisconsin in 1933. He



entered the Theological Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod at Mequon, Wisconsin and graduated in 1936. He was ordained by his father on August 4, 1936 at his home congregation of Friedens Lutheran Church. Adolph served his first call in the pastoral ministry at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church (Good Hope Road) in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from 1936 to 1946.

Adolph married Avis Stroede in Milwaukee on January 6, 1937. Their marriage was blessed with three daughters. They are: Aurelie, Ardis and Lois (the latter two are twins).

In 1946 Adolph was called to be the assistant pastor of his home congregation of Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenosha. On August 18, 1946 Adolph was installed as assistant pastor to his father, Carl. Adolph was subsequently called to succeed his father as senior pastor at Friedens on December 5, 1948 after his father's death in October of that same year. From 1948 to 1978 he served in this office at Friedens.

⁵ Ibid, 9.

Adolph's years in the pastoral ministry also did not only include service in the parish. He also served various roles and had a major impact on the Wisconsin Synod. His obituary reads:

He (Adolph) was secretary of the southeastern Wisconsin district of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod from 1946 to 1950; secretary of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Board of Control at Mequon from 1955 to 1967; second vice president of the Southeastern District 1956 to 1960; first vice-president of the Southeastern District from 1960 to 1962; and served as president of the Southeastern District from 1962 until 1972. He was a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's pension board, the Synod's Investment Board.⁶

Adolph also was instrumental in the organization of Shoreland Lutheran High School. He was a founder and charter member of St. Matthew's Evangelical Church in Port Washington after his retirement from the pastoral ministry.⁷ The reader will note Adolph's service to the Wisconsin Synod in some greater detail later on in this paper.

Adolph also served locally in other capacities within his community around Kenosha. He served two terms of office on the Kenosha Commission of Human Relations. Adolph also assisted on the board of directors for the local chapter of the United Cerebral Palsy organization.

The Lord Jesus called Adolph to his eternal home on July 25, 1982 in Port Washington, Wisconsin. Funeral services were held at Friedens Lutheran Church, where he served 32 of his 42 years in the ministry. Adolph was preceded in death by two brothers, Martin and Gehardt, and one sister, Mrs. Gertrude Ertner.

The Buengers at Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church

First, we consider the ministry of Carl H. Buenger at Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church. Carl accepted the call to be pastor of "The German Lutheran (Peace) Church" in 1902, after several unsuccessful calls were sent out. Carl served as the eleventh pastor at Friedens in the brief forty-six year history of the congregation. Only two of the former ten pastors served

⁶ *Kenosha News*, July 26, 1982.

⁷ *Kenosha News*, July 26, 1982.

more than six years at Friedens in this short time. Friedens' first pastor, in fact, was not at all Lutheran. The first pastor was named I.D. Huber. He was a Catholic priest in Kenosha during the early 1850s. But "In the spring of 1854 the German Catholic priest here, Rev. [I.] D. Huber, who a short time before...had emigrated from Switzerland, turned to...the Lutheran church and organized at Kenosha the first German Lutheran Congregation. Under his care and with him it joined the Synod of Wisconsin."⁸ From this strange beginning, the German Lutherans in Kenosha began to organize themselves in the establishment of a congregation. The History of the congregation reads:

September 1, 1856, was the memorable day on which, through its incorporation, the congregation publicly came in to being...The beautiful name adopted by the congregation was: 'The Evangelical Lutheran Friedens Congregation, Kenosha, Wisconsin.' It wanted to be a peace-loving people [*Friedens* is German for "peace"]. And although at times controversies arose and there was a lack of outward peace, nevertheless the gospel of peace was proclaimed in her midst and God had at all times a peace-loving people in Friedens.⁹

Looking back at this brief history, one might suggest a certain amount of instability within this Lutheran congregation of Kenosha.

That was not the case with Friedens Lutheran Evangelical Church! By God's grace, this church was solidly grounded and growing in the truths of his Word. By God's grace, Friedens also was growing outwardly as well. This city experienced a large increase of European immigrants during the late 1800s. Many of these immigrants were German Lutherans. The growth of the German Lutheran Church in coordination with this immigration had created a problem for Friedens—and it was a good problem to have. It was simply outgrowing itself! In 1883, Friedens Congregation outgrew the first church and school and built new buildings on another piece of property, just a few blocks south of its first location. But, by the turn of the

⁸ Carl H. Buenger, *The History of Friedens Ev. Lutheran Church*, trans. by Adolph Buenger, 27.

⁹ *Ibid*, 7.

twentieth century, however, Friedens Lutheran Church and School were once again feeling some growing pains. Buenger writes, “The school was enlarged by the addition of a third class...In the year 1904, the congregation took another step forward in the extension of its school through the erection of a branch school...”¹⁰ By 1905, the enrollment of Friedens School was up to 235 children in four classes.¹¹ These massive years of growth at the church and school, as well as in the city, caused Pastor Buenger and the congregation to think about possible relocation. Yet, it seems that growth was not the only reason why Friedens’ thoughts were on a possible move. Buenger records, “As the city grew and the population increased, more Lutherans were settling on the west side of the city and then the congregation was faced with the problem of again moving to a new location.”¹²

Carl Buenger led Friedens’ in their relocation efforts. The city newspaper reported, “The congregation voted unanimously to sell the church property [at a general meeting]...and at once begin the work of erecting a new church and school for the congregation on Ridge Street [an entire city block in what was known as the Rice Park subdivision].”¹³ It is noted that Pastor Buenger received two calls to other congregations in Southeastern Wisconsin during this time in April of 1908. He brought these calls to the congregation’s attention at this very same meeting, and the members unanimously voted for him to stay on at Friedens. Pastor Buenger announced at the conclusion of this meeting therefore that he “would remain and aid in the arduous work of building a new church and disposing of the present property.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid, 21.

¹¹ Ibid, 34.

¹² Ibid, 30.

¹³ *Kenosha News*, “Buenger Will Stay—Old Church to be Sold Now,” (13 April 1908).

¹⁴ Ibid.

Carl Buenger set himself arduously at the task of leading Friedens through another relocation and construction project. The congregation completed arrangements in May of 1908 when they chose an architect, and proceeded with the excavating for the foundation of the school themselves. Buenger writes, "The first spade of ground was dug on June 1, 1908. The cornerstone was laid on July 26, 1908...The dedication took place on January 17, 1909."¹⁵ Sunday services were held in the newly built school until the church was dedicated on December 19, 1909. This 1909 church and school is the present location of Friedens Church and School today.

Carl Buenger was a mission-minded minister of the gospel. He led Friedens Lutheran Church in its solemn responsibility to educate their children in their school, and he also led them in expanding the church's gospel ministry in Kenosha. The 125th anniversary historical booklet describes such mission-mindedness:

As mission opportunities presented themselves with the growth of the city, the congregation was mindful of its duty to expand its field of activity. Already in the year 1904, the congregation erected a Branch School in the southwest part of the city. When this Branch School was united with the present school dedicated in 1909 on its present property, the congregation did not abandon work in that part of the city. In the year 1914, a new mission was started with Pastor Edmund C. Reim as missionary. This is now St. Luke's Congregation. In 1921, another congregation was organized in the southeast part of the city. This is now Bethany Church. And in 1945, the third mission was begun with Pastor Elton Huebner as pastor, on the west side, the Mount Zion Congregation.¹⁶

Carl Buenger provided God's people at Friedens Congregation with stability. This stability he served his congregation with for nearly forty-six years. This stability, however, was not found in the length of his service. The stability Carl provided Friedens with finds its source in God's Word. Carl nourished God's sheep with that peace that this German church named its congregation after, the peace that they have in Christ Jesus through his forgiveness of sins. Carl

¹⁵ Carl Buenger, *The History of Friedens Ev. Lutheran Church*, 30.

¹⁶ Elmer Ungemach, *125 Years of Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Congregation*, 7.

nourished Friedens by preaching that peace of eternal life in Christ Jesus through his resurrection from the dead. It is this stability from God's Word that Carl H. Buenger provided God's souls with for nearly forty-six years at Friedens. Adolph Buenger writes, "The history of Friedens Congregation and its School during those forty-six years, with its trials and problems, its successes and its joys is the story of Pastor Carl H. Buenger's life. While eternity will first reveal the blessings the Lord showered upon his work, the size of the congregation, and the school...will stand in time as a monument of the gifts with which the Lord endowed him."¹⁷

Now, we consider the ministry of Adolph Buenger at Friedens. Adolph continued in his father's footsteps at Friedens. Adolph accepted a called to Friedens Lutheran Church in 1946. With his father's death two years later, the congregation recognized Adolph as the senior pastor. The congregation would not yet know it, but Adolph's ministry at Friedens would once again follow in his father's footsteps.

Friedens congregation was once again feeling some growing pains by the tenth year of Adolph's ministry in 1956. The United States felt the growing pains of the "Baby Boom" Generation in the 1950s, and it was no different with Friedens Lutheran School. Adolph writes, "During the course of this year [1956] our beloved school had an enrollment of 420 pupils...An overcrowding condition exists in our school at the present time, a condition which bids fare to increase with the years. The matter of expanding our school is under discussion. A School Expansion Fund Committee has been appointed to look into the financial end of such an expansion."¹⁸ This Expansion Committee wasted no time, and in 1957 they advised the

¹⁷ Adolph Buenger, *The History of Friedens Ev. Lutheran Church*, "A Brief Historical Sketch of Friedens (1946-1956)," 56.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 63.

congregation on a plan to renovate the old school and add eight classrooms.¹⁹ By the next year, the school renovation and addition were substantially underway. The dedication services were held on November 28, 1958.

Pastor Adolph Buenger, like his father, was a mission-minded minister of the gospel. He led Friedens in the spread of the gospel. In 1969, ten acres of land in Somers Township were donated to the Lakeshore Circuit of the Southern Conference of the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Synod. This land was to be used for church and or educational purposes, and was placed in trust of Friedens Evangelical Lutheran Church and First Evangelical Lutheran Church (Racine, Wisconsin) until it could be used for such a purpose.²⁰ The area churches did not delay with a plan to reach out to the Somers community with the gospel. A note of 1970 in the 125th anniversary historical booklet explains:

Exploratory church services are being held at the Somers Town Hall by pastors of the nine congregations comprising the Lakeshore Circuit. Average attendance has been thirty-five people. A survey by canvassers from all nine congregations will be made in the Somers area...to determine the number of unchurched in the area. The hope is to develop a mission church in Somers on the acreage donated...who have donated an additional twenty-five acres, which is hopefully to be used as a potential site for a new Lutheran High School.²¹

A Lutheran High School in Kenosha was nothing new to Pastor Buenger and Friedens Congregation. Friedens Lutheran School served as home of a high school from 1921 to 1930, and Adolph himself graduated from Friedens Lutheran High School.²² Pastor Buenger and Friedens Congregation, perhaps having this potential site and other current events in mind,

¹⁹ Elmer Ungemach, 14.

²⁰ Elmer Ungemach, 16.

²¹ Ibid, 16.

²² Roland A. Hoefler, *The History of Friedens Evangelical Lutheran School*, "The History of Friedens Ev. Lutheran Church (1856-1956)," 46-47.

adopted a resolution to add a tenth grade to Friedens in 1971, planning to establish eleventh and twelfth grades in successive years. The costs to begin this area Lutheran High School would be shared among the four congregations in Kenosha.²³ Adolph Buenger remained influential in the development of this high school throughout its early years as he served at Friedens.

Pastor Adolph Buenger continued where his father left off with the congregation. He provided stability for a congregation in times of great change in this world. He led Friedens in the aftermath of World War II up through the difficult and controversial years of separation between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods. He led Friedens with the only object that offers complete stability—God’s gospel in Word and Sacraments.

Carl and Adolph as District Presidents

(Carl Buenger, 1917-1934)

Carl served as the first president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Synod (1917-1934). Carl took on this position after the Federation of “The Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and other States” proposed to reorganize themselves in 1917.²⁴ This reorganization separated the Wisconsin Synod into three districts and made the other synods into their own districts. President Buenger addressed the newly formed Southeastern District in 1918 at its first convention. Carl states:

We are meeting this year under changed circumstances. Whereas prior to this we came from the various parts of our state, as well as other states, for an annual meeting of the Synod, today we are gathered only as a District of our joint Synod... This was done in the interest of carrying on the work of the Lord better... Times may change, conditions may be altered, adjustments to different arrangements must be made, but the purpose of the Church of Christ on earth remains one and the same: preach the Gospel to every creature.²⁵

²³ Elmer Ungemach, 17.

²⁴ This Federation of Lutheran Synods was established in 1892 at Milwaukee, WI.

The “winds of change” were blowing as Carl Buenger began his district presidency. These changes went deeper than just district reorganization. These times of change threatened to destroy Christ’s Church from within and without. The Church had just celebrated the 400th anniversary of the Reformation in 1917, and at that time there were movements striving to unite the Lutheran churches at *any* cost. Edward Fredrich states in his Wisconsin Synod history:

The year 1917 was a good year for Lutheran union in the United States. In June 1917 three Norwegian Lutheran church bodies, the Norwegian Synod, the Hauge Synod, and the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, merged into what would become known as the Evangelical Lutheran Church...Later that year final conventions of the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South set in motion the 1918 creation of the United Lutheran Church in America. In between those epochal events in the history of United States Lutheranism the Wisconsin Federation in August 1917 turned itself into the merged Wisconsin Synod...There were some notable differences in the Wisconsin merger, when compared to the two other 1917 developments...It was a union created without any tensions in the doctrinal unity.²⁶

Carl’s presidency clearly preached against these false unions as his newly established district convened for the first time. He writes, “Destroying errors are becoming very evident. On the one hand there are false doctrines pinpointed by the observance of the Reformation Jubilee, and the striving for a false union of churches on the part of the church bodies who call themselves Lutheran...The danger is indeed great that the confessional position of the Church be denied, or that it lose sight of its real purpose.”²⁷

The “winds of war” were already blowing as Carl Buenger began his district presidency. World War I began in 1914 and by the spring of 1917 the United States had declared war on Germany. Carl Buenger assumed the office of his new position on October 17, 1917, just

²⁵ Carl Buenger, *District Proceedings of the Southeastern Wisconsin District*, 1918, trans. by A. Buenger for 1966 Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention, 8.

²⁶ Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), 119.

²⁷ Carl Buenger, *District Proceedings of the Southeastern Wisconsin District*, 1918, 8-9.

months after the U.S. entered the War. War was fresh on his mind and the minds of his brothers and sisters in the Synod. The War was evidently on his mind as he made his first address to the Southeastern District. He writes, “In this jubilee year, with its melody of praise there also came the terrifying thunder of the war and bloodshed and the destruction of fields and villages and cities in Europe. Our beloved land has also been drawn into this strife, and we as citizens and members of our Church also feel the sacrifice that the present war demands on us.”²⁸

These times of change brought on even more danger. These dangerous times threatened one of the greatest priorities Carl Buenger emphasized throughout his ministry. These times threatened the Christian education provided by our Lutheran schools. Carl addressed the first district convention on this in early July of 1918:

In these trying days of war, we are also in danger of losing the precious gem of our Church, our Christian Day Schools. Because of our sin and because of our lack of recognizing our time of grace and the things which belong unto our peace, God might well withdraw his Word from us; and yet he is faithful and the covenant of his peace shall not be removed. This is our refuge and strength in these war-torn days, as we flee to the God of all grace...²⁹

As Buenger described in his report, the times they were living in were dangerous ones for the people and the Church.³⁰

Carl Buenger served as president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District through a difficult stretch of years. He began his years as the District President as World War I raged on in Europe. He would end his years as president struggling to lead his district back from the hard times of the Great Depression. He cited the difficulties of life during this time in his 1932 Report of the President, when he said, “Our country, as well as other countries are suffering.

²⁸ Ibid, 8.

²⁹ Ibid, 9.

³⁰ Ibid, 8.

Our Church and our Synod is also affected thereby. Our congregations experience great difficulties in raising the necessary means for church and school. Our Synod is unable to commence work in promising fields...How shall we do our work? God says: 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God [1 Peter 5]...The Lord will be with us. He will let his merciful face shine upon us.'³¹

He also maintained his office in the midst of several controversies swirling about his district and Synod. One controversy concerning the doctrine of election and conversion sparked great interest early in Buenger's presidency.³² Another synodical controversy that occurred during Buenger's presidency involved him firsthand. It was called the Protes'tant Controversy. One of the early problems that ignited this controversy was a thievery case that happened on the Northwestern College campus. Carl Buenger, remember, was on the Board of Control for Northwestern at this time that made disciplinary decisions in this case.

President Buenger was also personally involved in the later episodes of this Protes'tant Controversy. This episode concerned a conference paper written by Pastor William Beitz entitled, "God's Message to Us in Galatians: The Just Shall Live by Faith." Western Wisconsin District officials appealed to the Seminary faculty for an expert opinion ("Gutachten") on this paper. In 1929 and following, Carl Buenger would regrettably execute the duties of the president's office. Fredrich writes, "J. P. Koehler's synodical and seminary service was terminated."³³ After long discussions about the Beitz paper with others on the faculty and with school and synodical officials, Koehler brought his own *Gutachten*...His point, in the main, was

³¹ Carl Buenger, *District Report of Southeastern Wisconsin District*, 1932, 8.

³² This controversy centered on such documents as the "Madison Settlement" and "Chicago Theses."

³³ *Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1933, 38-39.

that the *Gutachten* had not put the best construction on the Beitz paper and that Beitz could in most instances be correctly understood.”³⁴

The district president’s office was new, not only to Buenger, but also to everyone. One could say that Carl was the “guinea pig” of his district position. No one experienced this kind of organizational system prior to this point. Carl Buenger certainly felt some “growing pains” along the way as he made some difficult adjustments in this position as president. Fredrich pinpoints one of those adjustments Buenger had to take on when he says, “Among many post-merger adjustments that had to be made, one that caused special difficulty was the assignment of discipline in doctrine and practice to the districts.”³⁵ This disciplinary responsibility, in part, was laid in the hands of Carl Buenger for seventeen years, and he served his Lord to the best of his ability in this office.

(Adolph Buenger, 1962-1972)

Adolph Buenger was the sixth president of the Southeastern Wisconsin District of the Wisconsin Synod. Adolph began this office in 1962. The “winds of change” were also blowing as Adolph began his district presidency. The change that affected Adolph’s presidency the most was the Wisconsin Synod’s breaking of fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1961. This break took place because of the Missouri Synod’s doctrinal position on the inerrancy of Scripture and church fellowship. Adolph was involved in this longstanding issue, in fact, even before he assumed the president’s office.

One specific event, occurring as Adolph served as a vice-president in the district, exemplifies this fact. A Missouri Synod pastor named Adalbert Kretzmann was scheduled to address a “Youth Rally Sunday” at the Protestant Youth Council Community Center at Kenosha

³⁴ Fredrich, 161.

³⁵ Ibid, 155.

(only two blocks from Friedens Lutheran Church) in January of 1960. The theme of this Youth Rally was “Thy Kingdom on Earth” as summarized by Paul Tillich in “Beyond the Usual Alternatives.”³⁶ Adolph sent a letter “special delivery” to Pastor Kretzmann the next day stating:

In brevity and without guile let me inform you that this organization has anti-scriptural objectives. I have met with...the head of the group on several occasions to explain to him on the basis of Scripture why we cannot fellowship and cooperate with this organization...Let me in all brotherly love inform you that your presence at this Youth Rally will be an offense to many in Kenosha within the Synodical Conference. Your presence will further undermine the work that we are trying to do before God with our young people. I beg of you to give this your sincere attention.³⁷

Subsequent to this letter there was continuing correspondence on this matter between Adolph, Pastor Kretzmann, district and synod officials on both sides, and the Racine Lutheran High School Board. According to the author’s understanding, this situation never was resolved.

Racine Lutheran High School was arguably the most difficult situation Adolph contended with during this turbulent time. Racine Lutheran was operated by the Missouri Synod at the time of the split in 1961. The question at that time was, “What then with our WELS children attending Racine Lutheran who are WELS?” Friedens and many other area WELS congregations were making financial commitments to Racine Lutheran. Should the parents simply pull them out? Should the parents leave them in and risk causing offense? The situation was not resolved overnight. This dilemma was not a “surgical separation” at the time.³⁸ The separation took place over the course of ten years. The separation was complete in 1971, when Shoreland Lutheran High School opened with a freshmen and sophomore class at Friedens.³⁹

³⁶ *Kenosha News*, “Chicago Minister Named to Address Youth Rally Sunday at PYC Center.” (27 January 1960), 6.

³⁷ Adolph Buenger, *Personal Correspondence*, (28 January 1960).

³⁸ Ronald Gosdeck (pastor at Friedens from 1973-2003), interviewed by author, phone interview, December 15, 2004.

The Wisconsin and Missouri Synod split was not an easy situation for Adolph Buenger. Adolph's daughter attended Racine Lutheran at the time of the split. Adolph was in the thick of the situation and personally affected. He lived with plenty of harsh criticism from individuals and from Synod throughout these tenuous years.⁴⁰

Adolph thoroughly enjoyed serving as District President. He appreciated all the help he received in men like Professor Carl Lawrenz and President Oscar Naumann. Adolph served his Southeastern Wisconsin District at one of the most difficult times in Synod history. WELS had no real "synod" structure. Before the split the Wisconsin Synod relied heavily on the Missouri Synod to organize the greater structure.⁴¹ It was in the 1960s when the WELS had to develop a structure. Thus, the Synod relied heavily on its district presidents. In the case of the Wisconsin Synod, Adolph was no exception.

Recollections of the Buengers

Carl was affectionately known by the congregation at Friedens as "Papa" Buenger. Two of his grandchildren called him "Gross Papa."⁴² Carl was a practical thinker. He was known as a strict disciplinarian inside the classroom, but kind, friendly, and lovable at the same time. His loud and dynamic voice could be heard everywhere.

Carl took his daughter under his roof again at the time of her husband's unexpected death. She, along with her two children, Paul and Ruth, would live there for the next sixteen

³⁹ Friedens was home of Shoreland LHS in 1971 and 1975-1979. Their current location was open at Somers, WI in 1979.

⁴⁰ Ronald Gosdeck, December 15, 2004.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Pastor Paul Manthey and Ruth Wade (grandchildren of Carl), interviewed by author, personal interviews, December 3 & 8, 2004.

years. Carl's grandchildren fondly remember their grandfather's favorite activities, in and out of the office. Carl would keep score as he listened to the Chicago Cubs on the radio. Paul would join Carl to listen to the Joe Louis' fights broadcast over the radio. The smell of a cigar or pipe would often waft through the air as Carl smoked in his home office.

Saturday was Carl's day to work around the house. Carl cultivated a large garden. He raised chickens, rabbits, and homing pigeons in the backyard of the parsonage. Of course, Carl was an excellent carpenter.⁴³

Adolph was known by those closest to him as "Adie." He was formal and polite in his manner. Adolph's big bass voice could easily be heard throughout the sanctuary. Adolph was a good athlete who was known to swim at the Kenosha Youth Foundation several times a week.⁴⁴ He also had a sense of humor that shined bright. Adie knew the German language very well, even sometimes making up his own German words just for fun.

Concluding Statements

The Lord blessed the efforts of Carl and Adolph Buenger. Their courageous and confident proclamation of the Lord's gospel message in Christ Jesus was not in vain. Through times of growth and from dangerous periods of change in their ministries, the Lord saw *his* purposes completed. The Lord used this father and son as true leaders in his Church for his good purposes on this earth and into eternal life. It was their prayer and let it be our prayer still today:

Lord, thou canst help when earthly armor faileth;
Lord, thou canst save when deadly sin assaileth;
Lord, o'er thy Church nor death nor hell prevailleth;
Grant us thy peace, Lord.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Peace in our hearts, our evil thoughts assuaging;
Peace in thy Church where brothers are engaging;
Peace when the world its busy war is waging.
Calm thy foes' raging.

Grant us thy help till backward they are driven;
Grant them thy truth that they may be forgiven;
Grant peace on earth or, after we have striven,
Peace in thy heaven. Amen.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Carl Buenger, *District Report of the Southeastern Wisconsin District*, 1918, trans. by A. Buenger for the 1966 Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention, 9.

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